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FACTS TO CONSIDER

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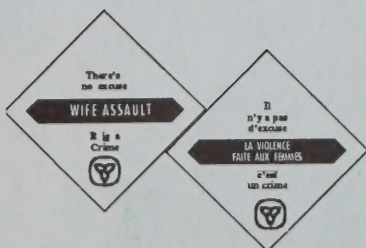


Wife assault presents a serious challenge to the health and well-being of women. It often results in physical injuries, psychological and emotional trauma, and even death.

- Assaults on women with disabilities can trigger severe physical reactions — a woman with epilepsy may have a seizure; a woman with cerebral palsy may develop even more unclear speech, staggering gait or spasms; a woman with diabetes may go into insulin shock.¹
- The effects of domestic violence on a woman's mental health and well-being can be just as serious as physical injuries. Assaulted women report a higher level of anxiety, somatic complaints and depression than women who are not assaulted.²
- A recent study by the Addiction Research Foundation found that women who are assaulted by their male partners are 74% more likely to rely on sedatives and 40% more likely to take sleeping pills than women who are not assaulted.³
- The Canadian Urban Victimization Survey found that 61% of women surveyed in 1981 who were assaulted by their spouses were injured in the attack.⁴ Among the injuries sustained by assaulted women are: bruises; welts; burns; dislocated and broken bones; torn ligaments; perforated eardrums and internal bleeding. Domestic assaults tend to become more severe and frequent over time.
- 40% of wife assault incidents begin during the time of the woman's first pregnancy.⁵
- Battered women may be more likely to attempt suicide than women who are not battered. In a study of 225 suicide attempts, 83% were made by abused women.⁶
- 61.7% of all women murdered in Canada in 1987 died as a result of domestic violence.⁷

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

- Wife assault victims are often undiagnosed or misdiagnosed by health care professionals.
- A study which reviewed hospital emergency room records found that only 1 in 25 cases of wife assault was identified.⁸
 - * Physicians often estimate the incidence of wife assault in their own practices at 1 or 2%, although conservative estimates indicate that at least 1 in 8 women in Canada is assaulted by her partner.⁹
 - * In one Ontario hospital, the number of reported wife assault cases increased 1500% after the establishment and implementation of a wife assault protocol.¹⁰
 - * Psychological symptoms are often treated as the problem rather than being recognized as a result of wife assault.
 - * Drugs such as anti-depressants and tranquilizers are commonly prescribed to women to treat symptoms of abuse. This can further isolate and depress assaulted women.
- Health services are often inaccessible to rural, native, northern and immigrant women due to barriers such as: geographic isolation; lack of transportation; discrimination; lack of confidentiality in small communities; limited and/or unaffordable services; lack of information on existing services; and, language and cultural differences.



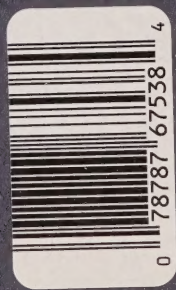
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